

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**REGULAR MEETING****Monday, July 8, 2002**

Present: June Bailey, Colleen Craig, Janet Miller, Trix Niernberger, and Joe Todd

Absent: Glen Dey and M.S. Mitchell

Also Present: Leah Hoffman, Brendon Hogan, Doug Kupper, Kirk Zoellner, and Maryann Crockett (staff)

First Vice President Bailey called the meeting to order at approximately 3:30 p.m.

1. **Discussion of Chemical Free Parks.** Niernberger provided board members two handouts. The first item was an article from the *Wichita Eagle* dated May 22, 2002, subject: Lawrence to dedicate pesticide-free parks and the second item was a copy of the Lawrence Parks and Recreation Pesticide Usage Policy. Niernberger explained that the City of Lawrence designated three parks as “pesticide free” and that they also developed a Pesticide Usage Policy in response to concerns of local environmentalists. She said Lawrence also posts signs to inform the public when pesticides are being sprayed in various park areas. Responding to a question, Director Kupper explained that the City Park Department used very few chemicals on park property, due in part to the fact that they were so expensive. He said most spraying was done on athletic fields and medians.

Niernberger asked if board members were interested in exploring the idea of pesticide free parks for the Wichita park system. She said she felt such a policy would raise the general public’s awareness of the use of pesticides and the effect they have on the environment (such as drainage into the river) as well as promote public safety and inform the public that the Park Department was not wasting money on chemicals.

There was discussion concerning Kansas Department of Health and Environment reporting requirements; the difference between herbicides and pesticides; alternative landscape maintenance methods using both mechanical and manual weed removal; and various Wichita park areas that would be good locations to demonstrate a policy, if one was developed. Director Kupper mentioned that all areas designated as “Wichita Wildlife Habitat Areas” such as Swanson, Chisholm Creek, and Pawnee Prairie Parks, to name a few, were currently pesticide free.

Since it appeared that the Park Department had already established pesticide free practices to a certain degree, Niernberger wondered if the program could be expanded citywide. There was brief discussion concerning possibly contacting the City Manager and Council members. Bailey suggested including the idea in the education program at the water treatment plant at Herman Hill Park. Todd asked if the pesticide free parks looked better or worse than the areas that were sprayed regularly. Staff responded that there wasn’t much difference since most spraying was done on athletic fields, which were high maintenance to begin with.

On motion by Niernberger, second by Todd, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to request that staff provide a list of park areas that are sprayed and the types of chemicals that are used.

2. **Breakdown of Operations and Maintenance for Park Medians and Right-of-Ways.**

Director Kupper provided board members with a handout that reflected operations and maintenance annualized costs in terms of dollars and percent of the total operations and maintenance budget for medians, right-of-ways (not medians) and park areas. Miller asked whether the budget had been increased as additional medians and right-of-ways were added to the City inventory. Director Kupper briefly explained that additional resources such as staff and equipment had been added to handle medians and various other areas such as the Northeast Sports Complex.

Niernberger asked about the difference between a right-of-way and a median. Director Kupper explained that right-of-ways are usually unimproved, while medians usually have some type of landscaping. Niernberger commented that she was appalled that only 56% of the entire park operations and maintenance budget went to maintenance of park areas. Miller agreed and requested that staff insure that this handout be included as an attachment to minutes that were provided to City Council members. Director Kupper pointed out that the beautification of the City was a quality of life issue and landscaped medians and right-of-ways beautified the City and that it was in the best interest of the Park and Recreation Department to maintain the quality of life by maintaining these beautification projects. Responding to a question, Director Kupper reported that there were approximately 87.4 acres in medians, 1,300 acres in right-of-ways and 4,500 acres of park areas/athletic fields. He also briefly explained mowing rotation schedules that varied between 7, 14, 20 and 60 days depending on the type of park area, location and maintenance requirements.

3. **Budget Discussion.** Director Kupper said he hesitated to get into specifics regarding the budget because it had not yet been presented and approved by the City Council, which he thought would have taken place prior to the Park Board meeting. He reported that the entire City had taken a budget cut across the board. Miller asked about the purpose of the budget discussion. Was it to obtain board members recommendations and input, or simply to inform the board what had taken place? Todd commented that he doubted budget adjustments would be made based on board member input. Director Kupper reported that there was a possibility that the Park Department would receive a \$318,000 maintenance contingency increase. Niernberger suggested that board members contact their Council members and let them know that the department needed the proposed maintenance contingency. Responding to a request, Director Kupper said staff would forward copies of the department budget to board members as soon as it had been presented to the City Council and was public record.

4. **Director's Update.** Director Kupper reported briefly on the following:

- **Riverside Park System Master Plan.** Asked if the Board would like Wilson-Darnell-Mann to give a final presentation on the Riverside Plan at the August 12th board meeting. Board members agreed that they would like to see the final plan.
- **Grove Park.** Said the Kansas National Guard would be providing additional clearing at the golf site; that the road through the park was 98% complete and work was continuing on the

current and future football fields. He also mentioned that Glen Dey was working with various groups on the landscaping along Hillside.

- Reconstruction of Tennis Courts. Said reconstruction efforts at McAdams and Eastview tennis courts were proceeding on schedule.
- Skate Board Park. Said staff was reviewing three different site plans and that the final plan would be reviewed by the Kansas Department of Transportation.
- Pools. Reported that there had been some problems with diving board platforms that were being resolved by staff.
- Summer of Discovery. Reported that the SOD program was progressing within budget. He briefly commented on scholarships and mentioned that Colvin School had initiated a free program that adversely affected participation in SOD at Colvin Recreation Center.
- Playground Improvement Program. Reported that the program was proceeding on schedule. He said staff revamped the Request for Proposal (RFP) and that bids would be let on a “design build” format with a specific dollar amount for each project. Also reported that the Claude Lambe Park equipment relocation was complete.
- Linwood Park. Reported that the condemnation was moving forward. He added that the independent appraisers had appraised the trees in the park at \$750,000 based on quality, size, species and other factors. Miller asked about the layout of the park road and drive.

There was also brief discussion concerning the status of several other projects including the Botanica expansion project; the Sisters of St. Joseph grant application (land donation was contingent upon grant approval); the Garvey Park RFP; and the Pawnee Prairie Park bicycle trail proposal.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 4:30 p.m.

June Bailey, First Vice President

ATTEST:

Maryann Crockett, Clerk
Recording Secretary